

Message Text

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51

ACTION SS-30

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R 021043Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7154

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 10291

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, VS, CB, ENRG

SUBJ: GVN/GKR DISPUTE OVER OFFSHORE AREAS

REF: A) CARACAS 7253

B) SAIGON 9520

C) SAIGON 9988

1. ON AUGUST 2, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY WHO IS PRESENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING GKR POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE DISPUTED OFFSHORE AOIL PROBLEM (DESCRIBED REFS B AND C), GAVE EMBASSY OFFICER A DETAILED EXPOSITION OF THE GKR POSITION. SUBSTANCE OF IT IS THAT IT WAS GVN, NOT GKR, WHICH SUGGESTED DIVIDING LINE MIDWAY BETWEEN GKR-OCCUPIED POULO WAI AND GVN-OCCUPIED HON PAJANG (REFTEL B). THE GKR CLAIMS THAT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ISLANDS IS INDEED AT STAKE, THAT HON PAJANG IS KHMER DESPITE GVN DE FACTO OCCUPATION BUT THAT IN ANY CASE THESE MATTERS ARE OPEN TO DISCUSSION. ACCORDINGLY, THE GKR HAD PROPOSED AS AN ALTERNATIVE, THROUGH MANGUY OF ELF-ERAP, THE LINE THREE-QUARTERS OF THE DISTANCE TO HON PAJANG (REFTEL B). ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, THE GVN REJECTED THIS OFFER AND HAS CONDITIONED FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE PRIOR ACCEPTANCE OF ITS LINE. THIS PRECONDITION IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE GKR. FURTHERMORE, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE

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AMBASSADOR IN PHNOM PENH, WHEN CALLED IN ON THE MATTER,

IN EFFECT TURNED OFF FURTHER DISCUSSION BY SAYING THAT THEREIS NO OIL INVOLVED AND THUS NO PROBLEM EXISTS.

2. THE MINISTER SAID THAT, NO MATTER WHAT THE EVENTUAL DECISIONS AND LINE-DRAWINGS MIGHT BE (AND HE INTIMATED THAT THE GKR REALIZED CERTAIN CONCESSIONS ON ITS PART WOULD BE INEVITABLE), THE ACTIVITIES BY THE DRILLSHIP GLOMAR IV (REFTEL C) WERE BEING CARRIED OUT IN AREAS ALWAYS AGREED TO BE UNDER GKR CONTROL, WELL NORTH OF THE LINE SUGGESTED BY THE GVN ITSELF. THUS THE GKR IS UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE GVN HARASSED GLOMAR IV WITH ITS NAVAL VESSELS.

3. THE SITUATION IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT GLOMAR IV IS SCHEDULED TO RESUME OPERATIONS ON AUGUST 4 AND THAT BY AUGUST 25 THE RESULTS OF ITS EXPLORATIONS WILL BE KNOWN. THE SHIP HAS BEEN CONTRACTED ELSEWHERE AFTER AUGUST 25, SO THE WORK MUST BE COMPLETED NOW OR NOT DONE AT ALL, ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER.

4. THE GKR IS EVIDENTLY QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT A POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION WITH THE GVN. APPROPRIATE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ARE BEING CONSULTED, HIGH RANKING PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANTS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT IN AND ULTIMATELY THE MARSHAL, WHO HAS BEEN KEPT INFORMED THROUGHOUT, WILL DECIDE ON A COURSE OF ACTION. THIS DECISION, ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, MIGHT BE MADE AUGUST 2.

5. THE MINISTER ASKED IF THE EMBASSY COULD INTERVENE WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO ENSURE THAT GVN NAVAL VESSELS DO NOT INTERFERE FURTHER WITH THE DRILLSHIP WHEN IT RECOMMENCES OPERATIONS. THE EMBASSY OFFICER STRESSED THAT THIS WAS A MATTER BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, MUST BE RESOLVED BY THEM AND THAT WE CANNOT GET INVOLVED. HE DID POINT OUT SEVERAL TIMES TO THE MINISTER THAT THE "NEGOTIATIONS" THUS FAR ON THE KHMER SIDE HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED BY MANGUY AND THAT IT WOULD SEEM TO BE HIGH TIME FOR THE GKR ITSELF, CONFIDENTIAL

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IN PHNOM PENH OR THROUGH ITS EMBASSY IN SAIGON, TO MAKE MORE OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH THE GVN. THE MINISTER SAID THIS WOULD BE DONE AFTER THE MARSHAL HAS MADE HIS DECISION. COMMENT: THE GKR HAS NOT HANDLED THIS MATTER VERY WELL, AND WE SUSPECT THAT THERE MAY BE SOME CONFUSION ON CERTAIN POINTS BECAUSE MANGUY, RATHER THAN A GKR OFFICIAL, HAS DONE MOST OF THE TALKING WITH THE GVN. HOWEVER, WE ALSO HAVE THE CLEAR IMPRESSION,

BASED ON TALKS WITH THE MINISTER AND MFA OFFICIALS,
THAT THE GKR BELIEVES THAT THE GVN IS TAKING AN IN-
CREASINGLY RIGID AND BELLIGERENT POSITION ON THIS
WHOLE SUBJECT. THEY CITE, NOT ONLY THE GVN THREATENING
GESTURES TOWARD THE DRILLSHIP, BUT ALLEGEDLY BELLICOSE
GVN DECLARATIONS AT THE LOS CONFERENCE WHICH FOREIGN
MINISTER KEUKY LIM WAS COMPELLED TO REBUT.

7. ALTHOUGH THE GKR IS PRESSING FOR EMBASSY ASSISTANCE,
WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS IS THEIR AFFAIR AND
THAT KHMER THEMSELVES SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO PRESENT THEIR
CASE MORE EFFECTIVELY TO THE GVN THAN THEY HAVE DONE
HERETOFORE.
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